

tones were commanding. "Look at me, sweetheart, and tell me."

Slowly her gaze dwelt upon his handsome although dissipated face, his well-fitting clothes, and her cheeks flushed crimson. "I don't know," she faltered.

The man bent his head and took toll from the rich red lips, but gently, so as not to startle her, and she gave a little gasp as she whispered:

"I am afraid I do."

"Afraid, and why?"

"Because it means such misery," she sobbed.

"Misery to make me the happiest of men?" he asked.

"No, to make you the most unhappy, for I am bound to my promise," and the tears fell fast upon the little ring.

A disdainful laugh rang out. "You are not bound, my little love," Philip Carrington said. "You are only bound to me because you love me."

Phridgia shook her golden curls. "You are wrong," she said decidedly. "I know what is right. I promised George."

"But he has not your love?"

"No," quite simply; "that is yours."

"That is all I want," the man cried triumphantly, catching her in his arms and pressing his lips to hers. The girl drew back, a horrified expression coming into her innocent face. She was frightened.

"Let me go; don't kiss me," she cried, struggling.

"Your love is mine, so shall be

your kisses," the man said with a laugh.

"No, no, no," she repeated, struggling still more.

Again came that laugh, then a strong arm wrenched her free, and George's voice, but so changed she scarcely recognized it, cried:

"How dare you?"

Philip Carrington looked at George insolently, then drawled:

"Who is this young farmer?"

Phridgia raised her face from her trembling hands and looked pleadingly at George. Never had she seen him appear to such advantage. He did not suffer any by contact with the city-bred man at that moment, although he was clad in gingham shirt and overalls.

"That is George Damson, the man I promised to marry," she returned.

"And who will protect her against you and your kind as long as he lives," George said sternly.

Philip Carrington laughed carelessly, and taking a cigarette from his pocket, lit it. "I wish you joy of her," he mocked.

The next instant he lay at Phridgia's feet, sent there by a well-directed blow from George's fist.

Phridgia had no clear notion of what followed, but she knew that the man who had insulted her received a thorough thrashing from George, and that he was helped on his way by several well-planted kicks. Through it all the man she had thought such a hero made not a single attempt to defend